

# ANADARA TRAPEZIA (MOLLUSCA: PELECYPODA) FOUND LIVING IN SOUTH-WESTERN AUSTRALIA

By G. W. KENDRICK and B. R. WILSON.

While at Albany in early January 1959, B. R. Wilson was asked by Mr. W. Swarbrick of Emu Point, Albany, to identify an unusual shell which had been found alive a few days previously. The shell was a medium-sized specimen of *Anadara trapezia* Deshayes (= *Arca trapezia* of the older authors).

Mr. Swarbrick said that a visitor holidaying at Emu Point had found the specimen while collecting "eekles" (*Katelysia* spp.) for bait at the mouth of the King River at the head of Oyster Harbour. Swarbrick had cleaned the animal from the shell before it was examined.

When G. W. Kendrick visited Emu Point in February, Swarbrick had obtained another somewhat smaller specimen of the same species, said to have been collected less than half a mile from Emu Point near where a small creek flows from Lake Seppings into Oyster Harbour. While still at Emu Point, Kendrick learned of yet another "unusual shell" in the possession of Mr. H. McKail of Alicia Street, Albany. This proved to be a fully grown *A. trapezia*, and is the subject of the photograph herewith. The specimen measured 81 mm. in length, and 66 mm. in height. Mr. McKail relates that he was given the live shell for fish bait one evening at the Little Grove Jetty by a man who had "half a sugar bag full," said to have been obtained near the mouth of the King River. He also observed that the blood of the animal was red when removed from the shell.

At the time of writing the habitat and exact locations where these molluscs were collected are not known. However, it is expected that this information will be available before long. Once the habitat is more accurately known field investigations will be undertaken in other inlets along the south coast, especially those between Albany and Cape Leeuwin.

*A. trapezia* has previously been regarded as having become extinct in recent times between western Victoria and Western Australia including Tasmania. It occurs as a fossil in certain late



*Anadara trapezia* from Oyster Harbour, x  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

Pleistocene shell deposits along the lower Swan River and has also been collected by Mr. W. H. Butler as a fossil at the Hill River north of Perth, where it is associated with the pelecypod *Katelsia scalarina* Lamarck. It is well known from the mid recent shell beds of south-eastern South Australia, where it is in great abundance. This species has commonly been used as a marker fossil indicating a warm water fauna (Howchin, *Rept. Aust. Assoc. Adv. Sci.*, vol. 16, 1923; Reath, *Proc. Roy. Soc. W.A.*, vol. 11, 1925; Sprigg, *Geol. Surv. S.A.*, Bull. 29, 1952, and others). This view seems to have been based on inaccurate and insufficient information of the living distribution of the species. The earliest of these workers erroneously believed that living *A. trapezia* occurs around the northern coast from North-Western Australia around to Sydney. This is probably due to their failure to distinguish between *A. trapezia* and *A. thackwayi*, the latter species being common alive on the mud flats of the north-western Australian coast. Because of the apparent extinction of *A. trapezia* in southern Australia they therefore assumed that its presence in southern Australian fossil beds indicated warmer water conditions than those at present.

Prior to the discovery of living *A. trapezia* in Oyster Harbour, the known living range of this species was from southern Queensland to Port Phillip Bay, Victoria. Within this region it inhabits sheltered mud flats of estuaries and inlets. It should be pointed out that the minimum water temperatures of the sea in the Port Phillip Bay region are below 10° C., i.e. lower than those where *A. trapezia* is now extinct in South Australia.

This species does not have a northern distribution and, as recorded here, it is not extinct in south-western Australia. There would thus seem to be little reason for its continued use as an indicator fossil of warm water conditions.

## HERPETOLOGICAL MISCELLANEA

By L. GLAUERT, W.A. Museum, Perth.

### IX.—*ABLEPHARUS WOTJULUM*, A NEW SKINK FROM WEST KIMBERLEY

During visits to Wotjulum Mission, opposite Yampi Sound, West Kimberley, K. G. Buller and A. M. Douglas collected specimens of a skink new to the Museum's collection. It proves to be closely related to the Queensland, *Ablepharus ornatus* Broom, 1896, from which it differs in more numerous scales, 30-32 rows, somewhat shorter hind legs and in its coloration.

#### *Ablepharus wotjulum* sp. nov.

Form slender, the distance between the tip of the snout and the fore limb 1.34 to 1.4 in the distance between the axilla and the groin. Eye completely surrounded by granules. Rostral having short suture with the frontonasal, which is wider than long and about the size of the prefrontals. Prefrontals forming an oblique suture and separating the frontonasal from the frontal. Frontal widely kite shaped, much wider than the supraocular region, much smaller